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Resiliency vs. the Coronavirus: A Reflection

Shelby Little

Journalism Major: Written as a personal reflection

Nature is a wild and untamed force for which we will never have all the answers, but isn't that what makes it so special? At Pepperdine, we pride ourselves on being Waves. Waves of character, leadership, purpose, and service. Scientifically, waves can come in many different forms, whether it be a sound wave, visible light wave, or a microwave. Yet the wave that overpowers the rest is an ocean wave, the strongest force in nature. When I think of the ocean, I think of a hungry and relentless force, something with a strong foundation that can be stopped by almost nothing. When there is no swell, there is not a ripple, let alone a single wave in sight. The ocean is still, calm, and peaceful. Of course, when there is a swell, the number of waves will differ, but more importantly, the size will increase. Picture waves 80+ feet in size, weighing more than 400 tons, so heavy that the mere impact would instantly kill a human. These waves are made up of billions and billions of tiny drops of water, yet each drop makes a difference. Without all of them working together, this force would not have the ability that it has to crack rock or snap surfboards in half. This image is how Pepperdine students view our community, from the Woolsey fire and Borderline shooting a year ago, to the coronavirus today, and to whatever challenges our future may have in store for us. Throughout these different events, there has been a common theme of resiliency that is constantly being displayed. Resiliency can be defined as, "the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness." or "the ability of a substance or object to spring back into shape; elasticity."

(Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary, 1999) After what we have been through as a school, a community, and a family, we have had many opportunities to display this trait while being there for one another and lifting each other up.

About three months ago, I had no idea what the coronavirus was. I have never been great at following the news and keeping up with different current events that are going on around our country, let alone around the world. As I began to hear more about it and what exactly this virus was, I continued to be optimistic with the view that it was "just a bad cold" and it will pass as everything else does, but oh how wrong I was. Things began escalating quickly and as we returned from spring break, my classes were having conversations about whether or not it was right that we even returned to campus. The thought of not coming back to school, which feels more like home to me now, was not even one that had gone through my mind, but with all the talk and anxiety that infiltrated our campus, it seemed like it wasn't that unlikely. I remember getting that email after soccer practice on Thursday morning and having very mixed emotions. At first as athletes, we thought we were going to be allowed to remain on campus and continue training, but even that got taken away from us. It broke my heart to think about the seniors who were not able to finish their seasons and the hard work that the spring athletes had been putting into training all year round for their opportunity to shine. The next few days were quite chaotic, but it felt more like eerie chaos. All students had to pack up and leave campus as

quickly as they could. Everything we had been looking forward to in the springtime, now taken away by this deadly virus. Walking through an empty campus on Sunday after most of the students had gone home was a gloomy feeling. A place that I had begun to call home, where I was constantly surrounded by people from so many different places around the globe yet I had begun to call my family, completely deserted. I began to reflect on all the things I now feel like I had taken for granted. Simply walking down Upper Dorm Road and passing welcoming faces on my way to class, or walking through the caf and being able to quickly chat with many different friends. Even a simple “hey” or quick hug on the way to the library, these are all special moments from freshman year that I will not get back. Yet through all of these emotions, all of these struggles, the staff at Pepperdine made a point to be there for us. Where else will you receive daily messages and prayers from the President of your University? Or texts from professors, coaches, RA’S, and fellow students reminding you that you are in their thoughts and prayers and simply reaching out a helping hand if you need it?

After returning home, the staff at Pepperdine did not stop their support. We continue to receive constant updates about the virus itself, as well as prayers, encouragement, and check-in emails. This communication is something that does not go unnoticed and has had a great impact on our community. During this time, it is easy to be overtaken by negative emotions. We feel panicked because of the uncertainty of everything. We feel unsettled and worried because many of the things that bring us joy and purpose have been taken away from us. We have been forced to reevaluate our whole lives; everything we have previously labeled as priorities, whether it be school, work, or our sport, has been upended. We have gone from being physically connected to friends and

mentors every single day to not even being allowed to leave the house. As humans, we are very physical creatures. We rely heavily on social interactions and physical touch to display our love and care for one another. We also take pride in our daily, weekly, and monthly routines/schedules. Now, that has all been taken away from us and we have been forced to improvise. After the coronavirus outbreak, but before it completely took away sporting matches, we were no longer allowed to give the other team handshakes before or after a game, but instead had to “elbow-bump” each other in a way to avoid contact as best we could. Similar to this, we have had to find other ways to stay mentally sane and connected. We are back to as normal a school schedule as you can be with everything online, and I think it is good for everyone. It has given us somewhat of a new routine and structure. The fact that we can all come together from across the world and continue to exceed academically is an example of our resiliency. Another way I have seen this being displayed is through our soccer team at Pepperdine. Although distance truly does keep us apart, we continue to meet as a team once a week and check-in with each other while holding each other accountable and continuing to meet the highest standards both physically and mentally that we have set for ourselves. Although we have been “set back” in many ways, we also have an opportunity to use it to grow and excel on our own. Without being forced to go to practice and workout every day, we can focus on other things outside of our sport, whatever it might be. For me, I have begun to do more writing and journaling, as well as different forms of art. This has been very healthy and has opened my mind to things I had not primarily been putting my focus on. It is very unlikely that we will have a time like this ever again, where many people are not allowed to go to work, school, sports, social events, or even the

beach. This is a time in which I have been closer to my family than I think I ever have been before. With three other siblings, it is not very often that we are all home together, but now we get to do just that. We have been brought together, even if it was against our will, but I truly believe that this is a good time for family culture. A time where we must not let our circumstances define our attitudes, but we can show resiliency and display our character in the way that we react. This time is not going to last forever and by slowing down, reflecting, visualizing, and healing, we can get through this together.

Romans 12:11-12 reads, "Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer." This is especially relevant in our time today and can directly apply to each one of us as we are quarantined at home. We must keep our eyes fixed above and not lose hope. For when this is all finally over, we do not want to be the ones looking back wishing we had done anything differently with the time that we had.